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GB 2291281 A US 5324209 A US 4998887 A

US 4786260 A

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(54) Holder for electrical connectors

(57) An electrical connector holder 60 is formed by a pair of holder members 70,72 defining one or more connector-receiving cavities for connectors 12,14 to be held therein for manipulation as a unit. The cavities include, along bottom and side walls, relief or clearance apertures for receiving projections from outer surfaces of the connectors. The holder members 70,72 self-secure to each other around portions of the connectors using fastening posts and post-receiving holes and may be hermaphroditic. A connector may be centred by means of ribs along cavity sides, which are crushed by the connector during assembly.

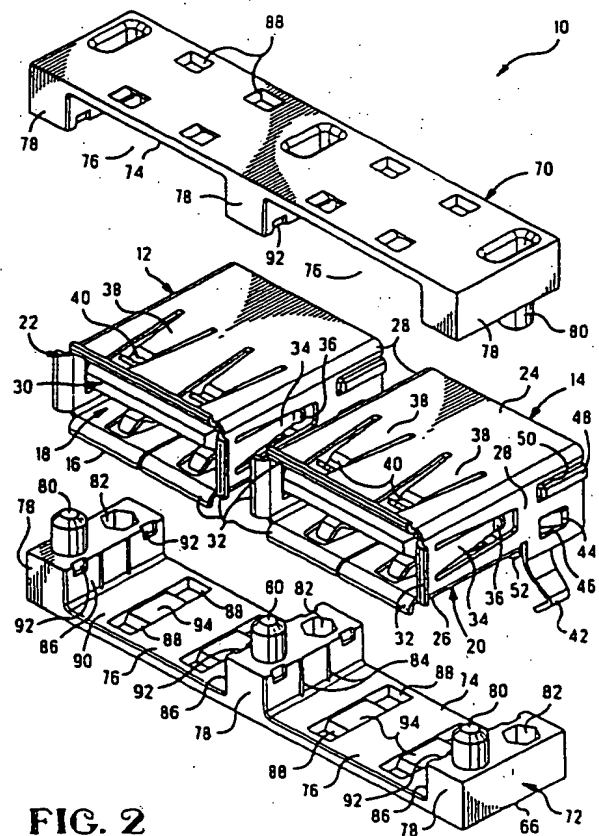


FIG. 2

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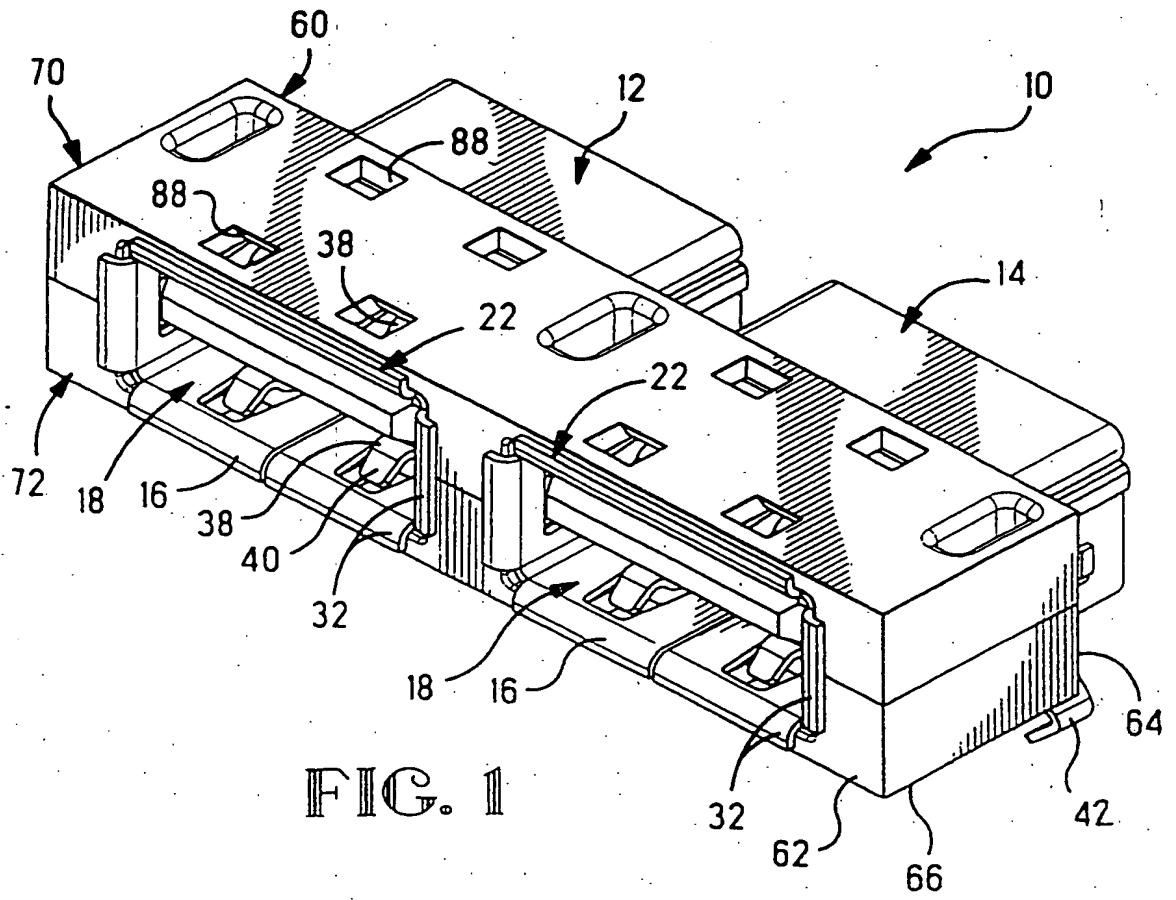


FIG. 1

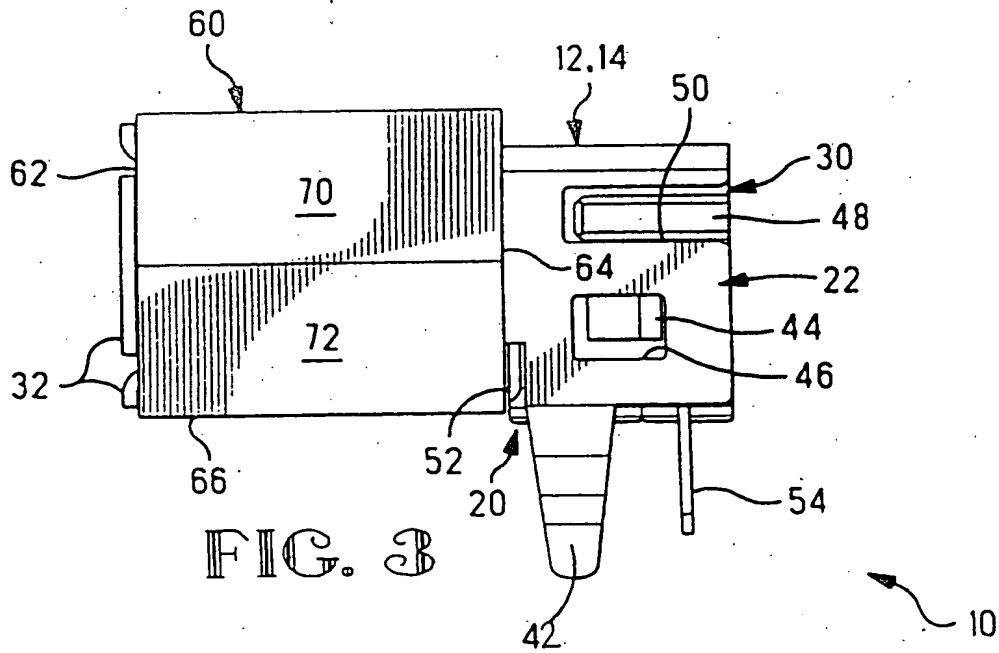


FIG. 3

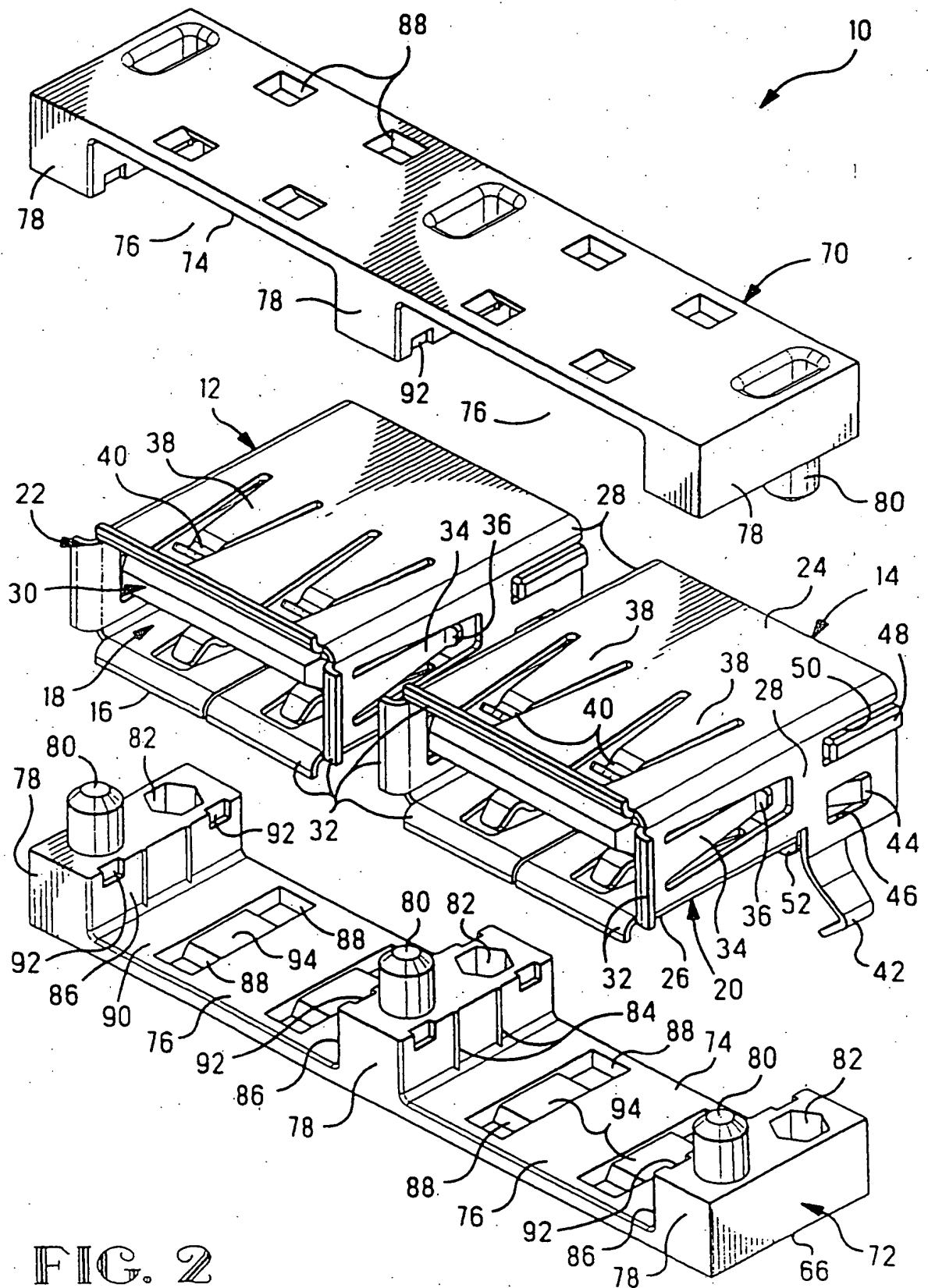


FIG. 2

HOLDER FOR SEVERAL ELECTRICAL CONNECTORS

5 The present invention relates to the field of electrical connectors and more particularly to shielded connectors.

Certain electrical connectors are known having an array of contacts disposed in a housing at a plug-receiving cavity, with the connector adapted to be mounted to a circuit board. A shell member is disposed around the connector for shielding against electromagnetic and radiofrequency interference (EMI/RFI). Such a connector is sold as a Universal Serial Bus receptacle connector having Part No. 95-8099-23-1 matable with a plug connector having Part No. 95-15 8083-19-1, both by AMP Incorporated, Harrisburg, PA.

In PCT Application No. PCT/US97/02490, there is disclosed an electrical connector, also board-mountable and defining a pair of plug-receiving cavities to enable simultaneous mating with a pair of complementary plug connectors. A shell member is disposed around the forward connector portion about the mating interface, and provides shielding of the mating interface at a panel cutout defining an input/output port of an electronic apparatus such as a computer. In this 25 connector, a portion of the shielding is provided along the bottom wall but is insulated from circuitry of the circuit board beneath the connector by a bottom housing wall, since the shield wall portions are disposed within a horizontal slot of the housing beneath the plug-receiving cavities. 30

In US-A-5,314,357 is disclosed a connector assembly having a pair of clamping bodies that interlock with each other and define therebetween multiple housing cavities wherein respective cable connectors are held.

35 It is desired to use shielded connectors having single plug-receiving cavities in a side-by-side arrangement, thereby eliminating the need for

manufacturing and maintaining an inventory of additional connectors.

The holder comprises a pair of opposed sections molded of insulative material and securable to each other about one or more connectors without requiring any modification to the connectors, and the holder assembly may be adapted for mounting to a circuit board such as at an input/output port of an electronic apparatus such as a computer. The sections may be hermaphroditic for reducing inventory of different parts and minimizing tooling costs. Preferably the sections include integral fastening means, thus further reducing costs and simplifying assembly, for self-securing to each other at at least two locations, with a plurality of locations being preferred in elongated versions of the holder.

The present invention is a holder for holding at least one electrical connector, comprising:

a pair of holder members of insulative material together defining at least one connector-receiving cavity into opposed assembly faces thereof in communication with front and rear surfaces of said holder members, and embossments to both sides of said cavity containing cooperating fastening sections along said assembly faces,

whereby the holder members are adapted to be fastened to each other surrounding a portion of a connector disposed in a respective said connector-receiving cavity and exposing opposed faces of the connector for electrical connection to other electrical articles, for holding the at least one connector for manipulation thereof.

In one aspect, the present invention provides a holder for securing together at least two connectors each containing a single plug-receiving cavity, in a side-by-side relationship. The two connectors may be different from each other, or they may be identical, such as shielded connectors that are presently in

commercial use, sold as Universal Serial Bus connectors having Part Nos. 787616-1 or 787616-2 by AMP Incorporated, Harrisburg, PA.

Advantages of the present invention include
5 providing insulation beneath the bottom shield walls of the connector, allowing the shields of the discrete connectors to include walls between the two connectors, reduction in height of the connector assembly, and
10 handling and manipulation of the connectors as a unit to facilitate board-mounting.

An embodiment of the present invention will now be described by way of example with reference to the accompanying drawings, in which:

FIGURE 1 is an isometric view of the holder of the
15 present invention assembled to a pair of shielded connectors;

FIGURE 2 is an isometric exploded view of the assembly of FIG. 1; and

FIGURE 3 is an elevation view of the assembled
20 connector of FIG. 1.

Connector assembly 10 in the FIGS. includes a pair of discrete receptacle connectors 12, 14 mounted within a holder 60, with mating faces 16 of the connectors disposed along a common front side 62 of the holder. As
25 shown, the holder preferably surrounds forward portions of the connectors. Each connector defines a plug-receiving cavity 18 extending rearwardly from the mating face 16 to be matable with a complementary plug connector (not shown). Contacts (FIG. 3) of the
30 connectors include contact sections exposed within a plug-receiving cavity 18 and may further include solder tails 54 depending from a bottom face 20 of the connectors for insertion into and soldering within corresponding through-holes, or for surface mount
35 soldering to corresponding pads, of a circuit board (not shown) at the rearward connector portion rearwardly of a rear side 64 of holder 60.

Each connector 12,14 includes a shield member 22 having a top wall 24, bottom wall 26 and side walls 28 to be disposed about the insulative housing 30 and defining the plug-receiving cavity 18 thereof. Front
5 edges of shield walls 24,26,28 preferably are formed to include short outwardly curved flanges 32 at the entrance to plug-receiving cavity 18 to effectively close the small gap remaining between the cavity entrance and the panel cutout periphery following
10 mounting of connector 12,14 just inside the input/output port.

Shield member 22 is shown to include shell-engaging spring arms 34 extending from side walls 28 rearwardly and into the plug-receiving cavity to outwardly angled
15 free ends 36 to engage an outer shield of a mating plug connector. Also seen are retention arms 38 extending from top and bottom walls 24,26 forwardly and into the plug-receiving cavity for embossed outwardly angled free ends 40 thereof to seat within recesses in outer
20 surfaces of the plug connector, upon mating, to retain the plug and receptacle connectors in mated engagement. Upon connector mating, free ends 36 of spring arms 34 will be deflected outwardly to protrude slightly beyond the remainder of side walls 28. During connector
25 mating, free ends 40 of retention arms 38 will protrude outwardly beyond the remainder of top and bottom walls 24,26 until seated within the recesses of the mating plug connector.

Each shield 22 further includes a pair of board-mount legs 42 depending from the bottom or board-mounting face 20 of the connector, extending downwardly
30 beyond the bottom side 66 of holder 60 for receipt into corresponding mounting holes of the circuit board. Shield 22 is shown to be securable to a housing 30 by a
35 latch projection 44 of housing 30 seating within a recess 46 of each side wall 28 of the shield; a rib 48 is also shown extending outwardly through a slot 50 of

each side wall 28 of shield 22 to assist in shield retention and to stabilize the orientation of the housing within the shield.

Holder 60 comprises a pair of holder members 70,72 and are shown to be hermaphroditic as is preferable. Each holder member defines an inner surface 74 to extend along and adjacent outer surface portions of the forward portion of shield 22 of each connector 12, defining half of a connector-receiving recess 76 to contain either the top shield wall 24 or the bottom shield wall 26, and half of each shield side wall 28 of a connector 12,14. Flanges 32 at forward edges of the shield walls 24,26,28 are disposed forwardly of front face 62 of holder 60 upon assembly. Holder 60 illustrates holder members 70,72 that are hermaphroditic, as is preferable; i.e., that two members are exactly alike and are adapted to cooperate to fasten together about the connectors. Embossments 78 are located between the two connector-receiving recesses 76 and at ends of the holder members.

Fastening posts 80 of each holder member extend beyond inner surface 74, and cooperate with post-receiving holes 82 of the opposed holder member in an interference fit when pressed together about the connectors, such that the holder members self-retain to each other thereafter to define the holder 60. As is preferable, holes 82 are hexagonal in cross-section, and the distance between opposed planar side wall sections is less than the diameter of fastening posts 80. Preferably deformable ribs 84 extend along side walls 86 of connector-receiving cavities 76 to absorb manufacturing tolerances and form a force-fit laterally with the connectors upon assembly for centering, while the holders are pressed together as closely as possible, which is tightly against the top and bottom shield walls 24,26 of the connectors.

The holders 70,72 are further adapted to complement connectors 12,14: apertures 88 are defined into bottom

recess walls 90 to define clearances for receipt
thereinto of free ends 40 of retention arms 38 of the
receptacle connectors 12,14 during mating with
complementary plug connectors (not shown) until fully
5 seated into recesses of the plug connector; and niches
92 are defined into side recess walls 86 for receipt
thereinto of free ends 36 of spring arms 34 during
connector mating. Each holder has symmetrically
disposed apertures 86 and niches 90 forwardly and
10 rearwardly so that either holder may be utilized as the
top of holder 70 or the bottom of holder 72, consistent
with the preferred hermaphroditic nature thereof.
Further, between forward and rearward ones of each pair
of apertures 88 is preferably defined a shallow channel
15 94 to allow receipt thereinto of retention arms 38
spaced from free ends 40 thereof.

With reference to FIG. 3, connectors 12,14 are held
in holder 60 against relative rearward movement by
flanges 32 abutting front face 62 of the holder, while
20 rear face 64 abuts housing 30 at stop surfaces defined
by front surfaces 52 of a rearward portion of the
housing extending lower than bottom shell wall 26.
Solder tails 54 of the contacts of the connector are
shown depending from the rearward connector portion for
25 insertion into and soldering within through-holes of a
circuit board. The connectors are held centered within
respective cavities 76 by crushing of ribs 84 along
opposed side walls 86 of each cavity, whereby holder 60
maintains the connectors in a known selected position
30 aligned with holes of the circuit board to which the
connectors are to be mounted.

The present invention provides a holder for at
least one connector that is adapted to complement not
only the size of the connector but also the structure of
35 the connector, both in the unmated and mated conditions.
The holder may contain several such connectors for
convenience in handling and mounting a plurality of

connectors simultaneously. If the connectors are identical, the holder members may be hermaphroditic. Additionally, the insulative material of the holder isolates the shields of the connectors from circuits of
5 the circuit board to which the shields would otherwise be adjacent, allowing the circuit board to utilize the space beneath the connectors for circuits, if desired.